

**Interactive Systems (CSE573)**  
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There are six dimensions(qualities) of feminist interaction as proposed by *Shaowen Bardzell* in the paper "*Feminist HCI: Taking Stock and Outlining an Agenda for Design*", they are as follows:

**Pluralism**

The feminist standpoint theory stands against Western scientific epistemology as it imposes itself as being universal, which, in turn, makes it normative or unsuitable for each and every situation. The feminist standpoint theory suggests that we should question what is considered universal. We should find alternative views instead of sticking to just one dominant view. In design, pluralism means rejecting the idea that there is only one correct way to design for all users. It is clear from Whirlpool's "World Washer", which tried to be a "universal" washing machine but couldn't cater to South India's needs, damaging their saris. On the other hand, Rangoli a successful example of pluralism was a phonebook tailored to use low-literate users in India. It was a user-centric product rather than a universalised design.

Briefly, pluralism refers to avoiding universality and accepting cultural differences.

**Participation**

While conducting user research it is natural that designers develop relationships with the users, it may vary in intimacy, from distant and objective in controlled laboratory experiments to more intimate in auto-ethnographic research. Participation refers to the contributions of a particular user's views in a study. It is crucial to understand that every person has some unique standpoint and is not substitutable. Participatory research is much more empathic whereas scientific methods of research cut the bonds between the researcher and the user. We should incorporate participatory research in scientific methods to gain valuable insights. Participatory Design originated in Scandinavia and some examples are involving museum-goers in exhibition design, engaging community members to solve local problems, and collaborating with patients, medical professionals, and software developers to improve dental practices.

Briefly, participation refers to including users in the design process to gain valuable information.

**Advocacy**

There often arises an ethical dilemma, when designers are working on empirical research they may implement structures or practices (in order to stay conservative in a sense) reinforcing the existing harmful practices. On the other hand, if they try to implement progressive solutions, they risk imposing their own values on users and the involved stakeholders. The quality of advocacy deals with this issue and feminist interaction design forces designers to question their choices when implementing solutions. Participatory design align well with advocacy as it directly involves the

stakeholders in the design process. Some examples are Nokia Life Tools and Ishakti, which provide information according to the weather and crop cycle so that farmers can maximise their earnings. They enable users to create a personalised experience and empower underrepresented societies.

Briefly, advocacy wants designers to implement solutions that should strive to improve society through design.

### **Ecology**

It involves considering the effects of design artefacts and how they can affect everyone involved. It also encourages designers to recognise how these artefacts affect the world around them and how they are affected by the world. The "Hoosier" cabinet was a great cabinet as it increased the efficiency of the homemaker however the marketing strategies that it used and portrayed women as the "The best servant in your house" reinforced traditional gender roles at that time. There has been growth in the ecology domain however it needs to be extended to race, caste, gender etc.

Briefly, ecology promotes designs that consider the impact on the environment and all stakeholders.

### **Embodiment**

Earlier HCI focused on the mental aspects however this approach has been criticized and a shift towards physically focused HCI is promoted, as there are differences and similarities between the genders, human sexuality, pleasure and emotion etc. Researchers are moving in this direction however more research needs to be done.

Briefly, embodiment promotes designs that consider the embodied nature of users, including gender and physicality and not just mentality.

### **Self-disclosure**

Every design, including software applications, is based on assumptions about users. These assumptions create an "ideal user" for whom the design is tailored. For instance, tax software like TurboTax assumes certain levels of user knowledge and financial complexity. Self-disclosure refers to the extent to which software reveals how it influences users as subjects. It brings users' attention to the ways in which the software shapes their identities and interactions. The author appreciates Amazon's transparency in its recommendation system and how users can change it if and when they like. They have provided the example of when they were being recommended erotic fiction and photobooks, and they decided to change it using the options provided by Amazon.

Briefly, self-disclosure promotes that are transparent about the assumptions they make about users.

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